

Company Background

Proficiency Testing Australia (PTA) is one of Australia's largest and most experienced proficiency testing providers. We have a reputation for providing friendly, customer-focussed service using qualified, experienced staff and specialists.

PTA is able to service a very broad range of industries, and many of our clients come to use our services based on the recommendation of colleagues. PTA has offices in Sydney and Brisbane, so our services and support are readily accessible.

PTA is accredited as a Proficiency Testing Provider by International Accreditation New Zealand (IANZ). The accreditation covers the specific proficiency testing programs listed on the agreed scope of accreditation. The accreditation meets the requirements of ISO/IEC 17043:2010 *Conformity assessment – general requirements for proficiency testing*.

Aim of the Program

The purpose of this proficiency program is to evaluate the proficiency of laboratories involved with the enumeration and identification of selected Phytoplankton; and to provide laboratories with additional external quality assurance and thus improve overall performance.

Application of program to accreditation

Participation in proficiency testing programs would satisfy requirements of ISO/IEC 17025: 2005 *General requirements for competence of testing and calibration laboratories*.

Program Details

The Algae Program is an annual program with each round usually scheduled for February / March of each year.

Participants receive a set of three water samples. An optional marine algae sample prepared from algal cultures may also be available for participants to identify and enumerate.

The samples are prepared from algal cultures from different classification groups and/or environmental water samples. These samples are designed to

represent those that would normally be encountered by an analyst in routine work. Participants are asked to identify and enumerate genera and species from various nominated groups that are commonly present or dominant in the test samples. These can include, but are not limited to, a selected number of the following: green non-motile algae, unicellular motile algae, centric diatoms, desmids, phytoflagellates, filamentous green algae and cyanobacteria. This requires knowledge of the major algal groups and their morphological characteristics and an ability to make a judgement of the relative abundance (by cell number) of all algae in the sample.

Participants are invited to choose their own method for enumeration, rather than adhere strictly to a prescribed method. Individual judgements could be made on suitable magnification, type of counting chamber, the proportion of chamber to be counted, the number of cells or filaments to count and the appropriate methods to estimate cells in colonies or trichomes. Participants are requested to report an estimate of their measurement uncertainty (MU).

Laboratories results are assessed for the number of identification outliers and the number of enumeration outliers that are reported.

Confidentiality

Each participating laboratory is assigned a code number to allow for confidential treatment of results in all reports and publications produced by PTA. Please refer to the PTA website (<http://www.pta.asn.au/index.php/programs/confidentiality>) for more information.

Fees

Please contact PTA for information on fees for this program.

Further Information

For further information on the PTA Algae Program contact ptaenquiry@pta.asn.au